A Well Defined Body:
Appreciating the Bible's Resurrection Language

On Easter morning, worshippers at Zion shouted *Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!* and sang "Christ has triumphed! He is living!" as we enthusiastically celebrated Christ's bodily resurrection from the dead. Christ's bodily resurrection is the bedrock confession upon which the Christian Faith is built. It's therefore essential that we are able to offer a reasoned defense of our chief confession.

One component of such a defense is found in appreciating the meaning of the Bible's claims that Jesus was "raised" and "resurrected." These are hugely significant words, words that carried an entire eschatology[1] with them (which we'll discuss below). For now we need only understand that the Biblical authors weren't simply claiming that a dead man had come back to life (as with Lazarus, the widow's son at Nain, or Jairus' daughter). Neither were they claiming that Jesus' soul had gone to Heaven. And they were certainly not claiming that they had seen a vision of Jesus after His death. Their claims were far bigger and far more surprising. They were saying things that no good Jew would ever have made up, things that rocked their eschatological world. Let's see why.

This Age and the Age to Come

For the Jew, life was essentially divided into two ages: this age and the age to come. This age was marred by Adam's fall and included wars, disease, famine, loss, mourning, grief, and the like. The age to come involved the restoration of Israel, the resurrection of the dead, and the manifestation of the glory of the Kingdom of God. Obviously they, like us, longed for the age to come. We don't have space to go into the nuances of their expectations for the people of Israel (hint: to their surprise it involved Jesus is an unforeseen plot-twist to rival anything coming out of Hollywood); we'll focus on their resurrection expectations.

For those interested in in-depth studies on the expectations of the people of Israel and the background evidence that supports the conclusions we're getting ready to detail, check out Dr. Jon Levenson's *Resurrection and the Restoration of Israel* and N.T. Wright's definitive *Resurrection of the Son of God*.[2] Addressing Israel's age-to-come resurrection expectation, Dr. Levenson writes,

> It perforce entails embodiedness: people come back in the flesh. But the flesh in which they come back is necessarily different from the kind they knew in their mortal life, for now they have become immune to death and the bodily infirmities associated with it."[3]

In other words, resurrection meant transformed, deathless *bodies*. And it's important to notice that their focus was not on dying and going to heaven; their focus was on living in resurrected bodies on the earth. It's absolutely vital to point out that for the Jews this was something that was inextricably connected to the age-to-come. Any talk of resurrection belonged to the age-to-come. N.T. Wright explains, "Resurrection… was thought of as the great event that YHWH [the Lord] would accomplish at the very end of 'the present age', the event which would constitute the 'age to come'…"

And this is why Easter is so surprising! The Biblical writers asserted that Jesus was resurrected. They were using age-to-come language! But they were

[1] "Eschatology" comes from the Greek word "eschaton," which means "end or last" and has to do with the end times.

[2] Warning! These books are deeply research-based and do not constitute light reading!

[3] 106-107.

using it for one man – Jesus. Wright explains why this was so surprising,

> Nobody imagined that any individuals had already been raised, or would be raised in advance of the great last day… There are no traditions about a Messiah being raised to life: most Jews of this period hoped for resurrection, many Jews of this period hoped for a Messiah, but nobody put those two hopes together until the early Christians do so."[4]

Make sure you understand what you just read. The apostolic claim that Jesus had been raised from the dead was utterly surprising and pregnant with eschatological (i.e. end times / age to come) implications. This is important to appreciate because it's a key piece in our case for the historical reality of the bodily resurrection of Jesus.

Why is it important?

Appreciating the apostolic claim to the bodily resurrection of Jesus and its age-to-come implications is important because it not only helps us to appreciate the great significance of the event, but it also equips us to defeat two of today's most common attacks on Christ's bodily resurrection.

Attack one accuses early Christians of stealing the idea of resurrection from various pagan myths of dying and rising gods – Jesus was a copycat savior. Attack two claims that the apostles were merely trying to describe their visions/experiences of Jesus after His death. Both attacks are defeated with the evidence. Let's see how.

Copycat splat

One of the more popular attacks on the bodily resurrection of Jesus is currently underway in the internet's virtual blogospheric world. It goes like this: the early Christians made up Jesus's resurrection from a patchwork of ideas that they stole from various pagan religions of dying and rising gods. And to "prove" their point they trot out a handful of pagan myths supposedly about dying and rising gods. It all sounds plausible in the evidence-thin air of the blogosphere until you come back down and breathe the evidence-thick air of reality.

In fact, the evidence against the copycat savior theory is so non-existent that biblical scholar Bart Ehrman, the self-described "agnostic leaning toward atheism," wrote a book in which he shot the copycat theory out of the air. First, he points out that there is no evidence anywhere for pre-Christ pagan notions of dying and rising gods; the stuff bloggers trot out has been ripped out of context and misunderstood. Second, he acknowledges the precise point we made earlier, that the apostolic confession of resurrection was rooted in Jewish age-to-come expectations. When the copycat savior theory encounters the evidence, it goes splat.

At a loss for words

Attack two, which sadly comes from many pulpits today, goes something like this: after Jesus was crucified, the apostles were overcome with grief. But on Easter morning Peter, maybe more, received a vision of Jesus or had some sort of spiritual (as in "non-bodily") experience of Jesus and they were at a loss for words to describe it. The best they could come up with was "resurrection."

If the disciples had not encountered the physical, flesh and bones body of Jesus after His death they would never – as in N.E.V.E.R. – have said that He was resurrected.

But recall what "resurrection" meant! It carried the entire age to come with it! If the disciples had not encountered the physical, flesh and bones body of Jesus after His death they would never – as in

[4] 205.

N.E.V.E.R. – have said that He was resurrected. They had words to describe visions and they had words to describe overwhelming experiences. They didn't use those words. They used very specific and very loaded terms.

What's it all mean?

What's all this mean for us? At least two things: 1) The historical case for the bodily resurrection of Jesus is solid and robust. And this means that the promise of our coming bodily resurrection is solid and robust, too. Like Jesus, we will be raised with bodies immune to death.

2) The bodily resurrection of Jesus is bigger than a dead man coming back to life and even bigger than a mere future promise for us. Remember what "resurrection" meant – it was inextricably connected to the age to come. So, if Jesus has been resurrected, it means He has brought the age to come with Him! It means that the age-to-come reign of God has come into our midst in Christ and we are invited to enjoy the blessings of this reign in an initial way even now.

God's age-to-come new creation has broken into our fallen age in Christ and through the preaching of the gospel of Christ's crucifixion and resurrection sinners are being forgiven and made new!

N.T. Wright, in his book *Surprised by Hope*, puts it this way, "Easter functions as the beginning of the new creation." And that's why Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 5, "If anyone is in Christ, He is a new creation." God's age-to-come new creation has broken into our fallen age in Christ and through the preaching of the gospel of Christ's crucifixion and resurrection sinners are being forgiven and made new! It's no wonder we shout *Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!*

FAMILYLIFE® PRESENTS

STEPPING UP

A CALL TO COURAGEOUS MANHOOD

A BREAKTHROUGH FILM SERIES FOR MEN.

Winston Churchill is often quoted as saying, "There comes into the life of every man a task for which he and he alone is uniquely suited. What a shame if that moment finds him either unwilling or unprepared for that which would become his finest hour."

Looking back at men of past generations, it is very easy to stand in awe of the hard fought battles and courage that was required of them. Sometimes, it may seem in our modern age, that there are no more battles to fight, no calls for men of courage to stand in the gap and face down adversity. The world calls us to mediocrity, ease, and comfort. Maybe it's not that there are no more battles to be fought, but that we no longer believe that they are worth fighting for.

God has placed a great burden of responsibility on all men, to lead our families self-sacrificially. He has called us to be men of great character, seeking justice and loving mercy. Loving our wives and guiding our children. Building our Communities and serving our neighbors. Honoring God above all things and seeking to do his will. And because we are responsible for these things, we will also be held accountable to God for them.

Join us for "Stepping Up: A Call to Courageous Manhood", a 10 week video and discussion series for Men, produced by Dennis Rainey and Family Life. Through this series we will take an honest look at what God's expectations are for us as Men, and how well we are doing at fulfilling them. So join us as we band together and support each other to heed the call to "Step Up" to the next level and to conform our lives more to the Image of Christ. Because our families need real Men, our Church needs real Men, and our society so desperately needs real Men!

Sessions begin Saturday, May 16 at 9:30 a.m.
Contact Mike Gore or the church office (655-2352) to reserve your workbook!

MEN

MINISTRY APPS—Zion Lutheran – February 2015

Applying the Gospel in Hearts and Homes

What's your favorite camping spot? Is it a favorite state park? Is it in the mountains or along the coast of a national park? Maybe it's the back yard. For many it may even be in the room of your favorite hotel chain. May is a time of preparation for the "camping season" at Zion and in the mission field of the Manning community.

Camp Out at Camp Discovery—VBS (June 1-5)
Shepherd boy, David, wasn't afraid to go into the camp of the Philistines to defeat Goliath. Judge Deborah led Barak to victory in the camp of Sisera. Jesus taught His disciples as they camped along the Sea of Galilee. Children venturing into Camp Discovery will meet these and other faithful followers of Jesus. At Camp Discovery children will learn the truths of God's Word. Registration forms are available at church and can also be accessed and completed on Zion's Web site: www.zionmanning.com. Many volunteers are needed to assist with crafts, coordinate snacks, lead recreation, and direct the campers on the paths of Camp Discovery. Sign up to assist in the fellowship hall.

The Christian Education Committee is planning some special events as part of VBS week. Watch for more details.

Zion will again host a **MEMORIAL DAY BRUNCH, Monday, May 25,** with proceeds going to provide VBS materials and supplies. The Brunch will follow the Memorial Day services at the Manning cemetery. Sign up to donate food items or to assist with the set up and serving in the fellowship.

Camp Out at Trinity Church and Heritage Park
Thursday evening summer worship services at Trinity Church will be expanded this season. The first service will be held on Thursday evening, May 28, with the service beginning at 7 p.m. Additional services will be held on June 25, July 23, August 27, and September 24. These services are in addition to our Sunday morning worship and are especially helpful for individuals who work on weekends or families who may be out of town "camping" on the weekend. Invite your friends and neighbors to these special services.

Heritage Park will be the setting for the 4th C-3 Summer Christian Concert on Sunday, June 7. The outdoor concert will feature Steve Reischel, who has performed nationally with several Christian groups, and presently is music director of a Christian ministry in St. Charles, Missouri. Watch for more publicity.

Camp Fire Conversations—Christian Education Notes

- Thanks to our Sunday school staff for their faithful weekly service. SS volunteers will be recognized on Sunday, May 31. VBS volunteers will also receive a short orientation after the service on May 31.
- Several men have expressed interest in a men's Bible study. A monthly breakfast study is being explore. If you have suggestions about this ministry or would like to be involved, contact Pastor Riggert.
- Thanks to the continuing support of the Manning Food Pantry. Food items can continue to be brought to the fellowship hall and will be transported to the Pantry. The Pantry is supplied to generously supply qualifying families from the community. It is open every Saturday from 8 a.m. to 10 a.m. Contact Community Opportunities (712-792-9266) for more information.

Two months ago we began discussing what may be the most difficult and thorny problem every worldview must answer: evil. In March we appreciated Christianity's ability to define evil – that which violates God's purpose or will – and how Christianity's approach to evil differs from other worldviews: evil is real, but is an invader to God's good creation, which God has and will overcome in Christ. In April we addressed what has been lacking in the traditional trilemma presented against God's existence, His goodness, and His power. We found that at least two key premises – God's eternality and wisdom – were missing from the equation, and these two additional premises showed that the all-good, all-powerful God has a morally sufficient reason for allowing evil to persist until He finally eradicates it forever.

This month we address evil's origin. While we address Christianity's answer to this question, we must remember that EVERY WORLDVIEW must offer an account for the origin of evil. For Christianity we begin in Genesis. There Scripture narrates the work of a creative God who, after each day of creation, declares His work "good." Once complete, He deems it "very good." This "very good" creation was free from evil. This is an important point to make because it means that evil was NOT a part of God's original creation. God did NOT create evil.

As we read through Scripture we learn that, at some point, a high ranking angel named Lucifer rebelled against God. A sizable minority of angels threw their lot in with Lucifer, but were roundly defeated by God and evicted from Heaven. Lucifer, now called Satan ("the accuser"), deceived Eve and led to the fall of Adam and the curse of creation. Thus Scripture narrates evil's origin.

The screaming question Scripture leaves unanswered, though, is why. Why did God allow it? Why did God create a world where evil was even possible? Theologians and philosophers have made several stabs at answering this question. These attempts to justify or defend God's ways to man are called *theodicies*. We'll address three of the most commonly offered theodicies.[5]

Soul-Making

In a nutshell, the Soul-Making Theodicy attempts to justify the existence of evil by claiming that God created this earth to be a training ground of sorts. Through suffering and his encounters with evil, God trains man to despise evil and to become the godly person God desires man to be. Proponents of this view claim that this end-goal – people who have matured through suffering and who see evil for what it is – could not be achieved in a world of perpetual innocence.

On the positive side, this theodicy challenges us to reconsider the purpose of life. Instead of being our personal comfort or pleasure, as many in our culture seem to assume, this theodicy reminds us that life has a higher purpose – godliness and moral maturity. Further, this theodicy challenges the notion that God simply exists to make us happy. Instead, God may send suffering into our life or even work

[5] For a fuller treatment of these theodicies see Tim Keller's *Walking with God Through Pain and Suffering*. For an in-depth study of the problem of evil, see John Feinberg's *The Many Faces of Evil*.

through evil to achieve the higher goal of godly people.

On the negative side, this theodicy is fraught with some serious difficulties. First, if human suffering was truly distributed by God so as to expedite human moral maturation, then it surely seems as if it hasn't been done equitably or even reasonably. Some of the world's most depraved men have known very little suffering while some of the world's most godly people have known incalculable suffering. Second, what of infant suffering? How are they to learn from their suffering?

Further, this view suggests that this soul-making will result in a sin-free New Earth. Because man learned to see sin for the horrible thing that it was in this life, he will be able not to choose it on the New Earth. But this fails to take into account the resurrection transformation and the empowering work of the Holy Spirit of which Scripture speaks (1 Corinthians 15:42-58). While offering some helpful insights and corrections to our expectations for life and our beliefs about God, this theodicy ultimately falls short of a satisfying explanation for why evil persists.

Free Will

Perhaps the most popular theodicy, at least in America, is the Free Will Theodicy. Tim Keller summarizes it:

> God created us not to be robots… but free, rational agents with the ability to choose and therefore to love. But if God was to make us able to choose the good freely, then he had to make us capable of also choosing evil. So our free will can be abused and that is the reason for evil. But this greater good – for us, of having a rational soul, and for God, of having real loving sons and daughters rather than some kind of 'pets' – is worth the evil that inevitably also comes.

In brief, man's free will was worth the potential evil that would result. Despite being very popular among Americans who regard freedom and choice as sacred rights of man, this theodicy is beset by serious shortcomings.

First, it begins with man and bends God's creative work around man's supposed sacred right to freedom and choice. Our right to freedom and choice are so important, in this view, that God wouldn't, or even couldn't, violate that. So, He had to give us free will knowing that evil could result. But this elevates man above God and dictates to God what He can and cannot do. Theology shouldn't begin with man. Theology always begin with God.

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Second, it assumes that God couldn't have created man free with the ability to love and not to commit evil. Couldn't God have shown Adam and Eve a video depicting all the horrors their sinful choice would unleash on the world? Couldn't He have shown this to every young child as a part of their upbringing to dissuade them from evil choices? Besides, freedom and sinlessness are precisely the promises of the New Earth. Redeemed man will be totally free, fully able to love, and incapable of sinning. As we mentioned before, man will be changed and empowered by the Holy Spirit. Further, God is fully free and incapable of sinning. So, it is possible to have totally free beings who are incapable of sinning. The problem for this theodicy is that it begins with a misunderstanding of sin and freedom. According to Scripture, sin is slavery. Tim Keller explains:

> The more capable you are to commit evil, the *less* free you are. Not until we attain heaven and lose the capability of evil are we truly and completely free. How, then, could the ability to sin be a form of freedom?

The Free Will theodicy is built on the assumption that man's free will is worth the immeasurable evil and suffering that infects our world. But is it? Is man's free will worth the Holocaust? Is his free will worth

ISIS? Is it worth human trafficking? Is man's free will really the reason God allowed evil to enter the world and why He allows it to persist? Free will is valuable, but is it worth all the evil and suffering? I'm not sure it is.

Natural Law

Among other theodicies offered throughout history is the Natural Law Theodicy. This justification for evil argues that the created world needs to have a natural and reasonable order to it. So, for example, the laws of gravity and motion apply evenly across the board. If you drive a car at a high rate of speed around a hairpin turn, you should not be surprised when your car leaves the road and you get hurt. The laws of nature apply. So while natural laws make life possible; they also make the potentiality of suffering inevitable.

As far as it goes this theodicy is helpful, but suffering isn't often limited to an individual's breaking of the laws of nature. Sometimes the one who suffers isn't the one who breaks nature's laws. Take our out-of-control driver example. Too often he isn't the one who suffers; it's the driver he hits, the driver who wasn't transgressing the laws of nature, who suffers. This theology helpfully points out the connection between natural laws and natural consequences, but evil and suffering are not so easily explained.

Where does this leave us?

Does this mean Christianity can't stand up under the weight of the question of evil and suffering? No. It merely means that our explanations are limited (as they will be in every worldview). Fully satisfactory explanations or justifications for evil may not be possible. And, given our finitude and limited perspective, this shouldn't surprise us! If children can't fully understand the ways of parents, should we expect fully to understand the ways of God? Further, we need to remember that just because we can't see God's reasons for allowing evil to persist, it doesn't mean God doesn't have any. We discussed this last month when we highlighted God's eternality and His wisdom. These attributes of God help us to accept the temporary persistence of evil even if we can't fully explain why God allows it.

It's also important to remember that the Bible never claims to give an exhaustive account of God or life. So we shouldn't complain when we don't find one. We call the Bible *sufficient for salvation*, but not exhaustive in the subjects it addresses. So it may feel sometimes as if we only have half the story, but as many have pointed out, it's the half that we need! God has revealed His will for mankind – to save us through the cross and resurrection of Jesus! This we know with absolute certainty. Sorrow, suffering, death, pain, and evil are temporary intruders in God's creation.

It may feel sometimes as if we only have half the story, but as many have pointed out, it's the half that we need!

Further, we know that God is not the source of moral evil. He may, as we'll discuss in the future, bring calamity, hardship, and suffering into our lives, but we understand that He will use them to bring about His good purposes (even if we can't see them!). Even more, God may use evil in spite of itself to accomplish His will (recall Pharaoh and even the crucifixion of Jesus).

The hard truth is that the one responsible for bringing evil into the world is man. And the one responsible for perpetuating evil in the world is man. But! the solution is also found in a man – the sinless Jesus. He has suffered justice for our evil, defeated death, and when He returns He will undo the curse of Adam and set things to rights. So the source of evil was the man Adam; the solution for evil is the man Christ.

But what about *personal* suffering like cancer? And what about "natural evils" like tsunamis, tornadoes, and the like? How does Christianity address these? We'll get to these questions and more as our series continues next month. – Pastor Conner

The Crossroads of America in the Crosshairs of "Controversy" and Why the Real Target Isn't Indiana

On March 26, Indiana Governor Mike Pence quietly signed the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) into law to protect the religious liberties of the people of Indiana. Before the ink dried, media outlets, while ignoring the 19 other states that have similar RFRA laws and the other 10 who have religious liberty protections, were drumming up a frenzied outrage over this supposedly "controversial" law, alleging it was discriminatory and anti-gay.

Such reporting is misleading. The fact of the matter is that Indiana's RFRA bill passed the Indiana legislature with a two-to-one majority. Further, Indiana's RFRA was based on the federal RFRA bill which President Clinton signed into law in 1993.[6] The federal bill passed the Senate and the Congress with only three dissenting votes total! That's hardly "controversial."

Further still, the bill, for those who bothered to read it, says nothing about homosexuality. According to the Indiana General Assembly website, RFRA

> Provides that a state or local government action may not substantially burden a person's right to the exercise of religion unless it is demonstrated that applying the burden to the person's exercise of religion is: (1) essential to further a compelling governmental interest; and (2) the least restrictive means of furthering the compelling governmental interest.

But surely media pundits know this; they are not naïve. Whether we like it or not, the media has an agenda. Perceptive observers saw the media consistently choose the words "controversial, anti-gay, and discriminatory" for a bill that was strongly supported and said nothing about homosexuality or discrimination. Such words were intentionally chosen to negatively portray the law and bias hearers toward an unfavorable perspective. And they have been very effective at it, as a recent interchange in a Zion Sunday school classroom made clear. One of our teachers relayed to me one of the questions he was asked by some of his students. They wanted to know why Indiana was discriminating against gay people. That's precisely the conclusion the media wanted them to make.

Observers also noticed how the media consistently pitted gay rights against "religious freedom." Notice the scare quotes. These were chosen again to bias hearers and to diminish the legitimacy of religious freedom and to portray it as something they deem untrue or highly debatable.

Further, observers noticed how media representatives framed the story. They spoke of businesses being allowed to "deny/refuse service" to LBGT (lesbian, bi, gay, transgender) people and not of business owners being forced to participate in an event that violates their conscience. And there's a big difference! RFRA does not allow any business to refuse to sell products to LBGT people (despite what media reports led people to believe). Instead, and very few media sources reported this, RFRA (before Gov. Pence added his recent amendment) was designed to protect business owners from being forced by the government to wed their creative craft or work to an event that violated their conscience. For example, bakers would NOT be allowed to refuse to bake a birthday cake for a LBGQT person, but RFRA would protect them from being forced to bake a cake to celebrate a same-sex wedding which violates their conscience. See the difference?

[6] The Supreme Court ruled it unconstitutional in 1997. The Court ruled that it gave too much power to the federal government and that such laws should be left to the states.

But why are we talking about this?

All that may be curiously interesting to you, but you might be asking yourself, 'Why is this in our church newsletter?' Good question. We'll answer it by directing your attention to an article published on April 3 in the *New York Times* by a Mr. Frank Bruni entitled, "Bigotry, the Bible and the Lessons of Indiana."[7] Mr. Bruni's piece succinctly captures the media mindset that has been driving its frenzy over RFRA. And you need to know, it's increasingly hostile toward historic Christianity.

You may not be a regular reader of the *Times*, but that doesn't matter. The *New York Times*, as nationally syndicated columnist of GetReligion.org Terry Mattingly, explains, "is the high church, the magisterium, for artists, journalists and thinkers that shape popular culture." In other words, the people who are shaping our culture are shaped by the *New York Times*. It's the larger media's playbook. It teaches them what to think.

According to the *Times'* article, "Conservative Christian religion is the last bulwark against full acceptance of L.G.B.T. people." Further, it is the "most stubborn refuge for homophobia" and it gives "license to discrimination." And, with all the hubris of the chronological snob of which C.S. Lewis classically warned, the *Times* claims that Christianity's opposition to LGBT behavior[8] is all based on a naïve decision to prioritize "scattered passages of ancient texts over all that has been learned since – as if time had stood still, as if the advance of science and knowledge meant nothing." In other words, conservative Christianity has no good reason for opposing LGBT behavior other than a blind, ill-informed loyalty to an outdated tradition.

The *Times'* message is clear: our modern age has achieved a greater level of enlightenment over the ages gone by and our advances in science have trumped any moralistic assertions in any ancient text such as the Bible. Further, Christianity doesn't have any good reason for opposing LGBT behavior.

If space permitted, we'd take a closer look at the *Times'* article, taking time to point out its scientifically unfounded assertions, its one-sided selection of alleged experts, and its astoundingly naïve assertion that Christians who have for the last 2,000 years unanimously understood the Bible's teaching on sexuality as affirming the Creator's design in Genesis were kept from reaching the right conclusions because of the biblical authors' culture-bound "biases" and "blind spots."

In brief, the article echoes the assumed scientifically supported conclusion that "same-sex attraction [is] a fundamental part of a person's identity." We wrote about this in the December 2014 Zion newsletter. First, we are not defined by our desires, but by our status as created and redeemed people. The question is: are our desires good and should we allow them to define us? Second, science does not show that identities are defined by desires. *Scientists* have made such claims, but not science. And the main scientist to make such an assertion was the sexually deviant Alfred Kinsey, whose shockingly perverse "research" has been thoroughly discredited.[9]

Further, the piece insinuates that because several authors have written reinterpretations of Scripture's teachings on sexual ethics to favor LBGT behavior that the question is settled (as if sound refutations haven't been written). And finally, we are expected to overlook the irony of a culture-bound author with

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[7] Read the whole piece here: http://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/05/opinion/sunday/frank-bruni-same-sex-sinners.html?_r=0

[8] This is a point the *Times* article missed. Christianity does not oppose LBGT *people*; it opposes *behavior* that is contrary to the Creator's will and design for His creation.

[9] To read more on Mr. Kinsey, follow this link: http://www.salvomag.com/new/articles/salvo12/12segelstein.php

a painfully obvious bias and plainly evident blind spot warning us not to be misled by a biblical author's culture-bound bias and blind spot.

All of that merits its own extended treatment, but will have to wait for another day. What concerns us for now is the article's bald-faced conclusion. It concludes by approvingly quoting these LBGT advocate's threatening words: "church leaders must be made 'to take homosexuality off the sin list.'"

Process those words: church leaders must be made to take homosexuality off the sin list. Few people have been bold enough to come right out and say this, but this is what's driving much of the LGBT movement and why the RFRA (over)reaction should get our attention. Their real target isn't Indiana; their real target is the church. They want homosexuality (and a whole host of other sexually immoral behaviors) off the sin list. And make no mistake; they've amassed a great amount of power and money to accomplish their goal – and they're eager to use it.[10] The Christian Church is going to face increased opposition for its historic confession.

A recent article, entitled "The Post-Indiana Future for Christians," by cultural commentator Rod Dreher made this chilling observation about the situation:

> Cultural pressure is going to radically reduce orthodox Christian numbers in the years to come. The meaning of what it means to be a faithful Christian is going to come under intense fire… not only from outside the churches, but from within. There will be serious stigma attached to standing up for orthodox teaching on homosexuality.

In other words, the tide of opposition against historic Christianity is rising; we need to be ready to stand. Mr. Dreher shares several places Christians need to start their preparations. 1) "the importance of community in forming moral consciences should lead Christians to think of their… congregations as the basic unit of Christian life." I made this point at our December voters' meeting when I referred to the church as the hub of our life. If we are going to maintain our identity as confessing Christians, we're going to need to re-center our lives around the church.

2) "It is vital to find a strong church where people know what they believe and why, and are willing to help others in the church teach those truths and live them out joyfully." Reading your monthly newsletter is a great place to start. It is specifically designed to equip you to understand and defend your faith.

3) Christians should "read about church history, including the lives of the saints, and to acquaint themselves with the fact that the Christian church has actual roots, and teachings. It's not about what you 'feel' is Christian." We are not the Church of the brand new; we are the church of the historically true. Our teachings aren't rooted in the latest cultural enlightenment, but in the created order of God and in His revealed will.

4) Christians should only marry confessing Christians and should begin embracing larger families. The Faith is transmitted in families and Christians must again see the importance of passing on the Faith. Further, we need to regain an appreciation for marriage and family as the cradle of culture and the bedrock of civilization.

5) "Christians should put their families on a 'media fast.' Throw out the TV. Limit Netflix. You cannot let in contemporary stuff. It's garbage. It's a sewage pipe into your home. So many parents think they're holding the line, but they let their kids have unfettered access to TV, the Internet, and smartphones. You can't do that."

The situation is serious and our response must be too. If we aren't prepared to take what to some might appear to be drastic measures, then we must prepare to watch historic Christianity be swept away by the cultural tide. This is a call to stand. Are you ready? – Pastor Conner

[10] See a sampling of their victims in Zion's April Newsletter.

Join *Camp Discovery* VBS (June 1-5 from 8:45-11:30 a.m.) where your children will learn how Jesus works in and through us! They'll look into the Bible, God's Holy Word, and explore five tree-mendous Bible accounts where God works in His people to save them and through His people to serve! Jesus saves us, gives us faith, courage, and wisdom to serve Him and share His good news with our neighbor!

Registration is open for 4 year olds through 7th graders. You can register online at [www.zionmanning.com/events.php] or in person. Questions? Give us a call (655-2352) or email (zmanning@mmctsu.com).

Zion Newsletter—Preschool Praises—May 2015

Praise God for another year of blessings! The closing program will be on Tuesday evening, May 19 at 7:00 p.m. The "graduation" ceremony is always a special event for children and families. The last day of classes for the school year will be on Wednesday, May 20.

Praise God for Mrs. Nemitz, Mrs. Hugeback and other volunteers who have done an exceptional job of maintaining the routine during Mrs. Fink's illness and following her death.

Praise God for preschool parents, congregation members, and the preschool board members, for the assistance at the appreciation/benefit event for the Fink family. We estimate that four hundred people were in attendance. The generous food donations and generous gifts to the family provided a very nice monetary gift to the family. Individuals who still wish to contribute can bring their donation designated to "Fink Benefit" to the church office. Thrivent financial chapters of Carroll and Crawford counties provided supplemental funding for the family.

Praise God for His promises which take us into the future. The preschool board will be advertising and accepting applications for the preschool director position. The job description for the position and application forms are available in the church office. God-willing next year's program will include two 3 year-old morning classes (MWTh, and TWF) and a 4 year-old afternoon class. Registrations packets are available from the preschool staff or in the church office.

Praise God for His comfort in our grief. The pastors have prepared materials to assist families in their conversations with children about "Death and Life." The resources address the dynamics of grief for children and provides Biblical answers to some of the questions children may ask. The materials are in the fellowship hall and are available to any interested persons.
Jesus said, "Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God" (Mark 10:14)

Diane Riggert, Preschool Board chairperson

Ladies Guild

April Highlights

Zion Guild ladies opened the session with the LWML pledge. Pastor Conner gave devotion from John 20:19-20. Margaret Backhaus continued with a reading entitled "I am He and you are right." The mite offering and mite box prayer were offered.

The business meeting was opened by President Cheryl Buhr in the name of the Triune God. The secretary pro tem, Audrey Roe, called the roll. Fourteen members were present. The minutes from the March meeting were read. Correspondence included a thank you from Carlys Stribe and notification of a woman's retreat April 24-26 at Camp Okoboji. The notification is posted on the information board. Barb Anderson, treasurer reported on activity. Kitchen treasurer, Darlene Vollstedt also reported.

President Cheryl announced birthday and anniversaries of members and associates. Copies of information on the Orphan Grain Train collecting, packing, and shipping information were given to all present. Judy Musfeldt thanked everyone for their prayers and cards she has received the past months.

Audrey Roe reported on activity of quilting. Four quilts have been donated to benefits, two to the Schlichte benefit and two to Jeff Jones benefit. Seven quilts were donated to New Opportunities in Carroll. The delivery of the quilts, soap, and other kits (school, health) for shipping to LWR will be May 4th. The quilting activity at the church will then recess until September. However there are many bundles of quilt tops assembled for sewing together to prepare for next year's tying into quilts. They are in the "quilt closet" with information posted for at home summer sewing pleasure.

Sunshine chair, Bev Grundmeier reported sending two sympathy cards and one birthday card. Circle reports were given. Circle # 2 will serve April coffee fellowship.

Old Business:

- The Spring Rally at Peace Lutheran, Glidden will be April 18. A head count was taken of members that will be attending.
- Confirmation Witness and Confirmation will be April 22 and 26. New gowns have been purchased which have a red embroidered dove. It was decided to not use carnations as the flower would cover the dove.
- Contact Rhonda Grimm or Pastor Riggert if you wish to volunteer at the food pantry.

New Business:

- Quilt packing and shipping information received. Audrey and Howard Roe will deliver the quilts to Ellerbrock trucking at Sac City. The mileage fee is to go to Human Care for buying thread per request from Audrey Roe.
- Graduation breakfast will be May 17th with Sandra Vahl in charge. A sign-up sheet for contributions is on the information desk in the fellowship hall. Margaret Backhaus and Bev Grundmeier will purchase a bookmark and write the graduates confirmation verse on the bookmark and give as a gift from the Guild to the 15 graduates.

Plaza bingo will be April 24. Chair is Margaret Backhaus with assist from Mary Grimm, Charlene Hickman, and Audrey Roe. The May Guild meeting will be May 13th with hostesses Judy Musfeldt and Margaret Kuchel.There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned. Members prayed the Lord's Prayer and the Table Prayer. Respectfully submitted, Audrey Roe

Charles, Cheryl, Caleb, Caitlin, Carissa, and Cassie Ferry
Missionaries to Indonesia

March 2015

SELAMAT

Maaf, ini terlambat! (Indonesian for "Sorry, this is late!")

When I accepted the Call to LCMS International, I actually missed the regular preaching and teaching that was the norm for parish pastors. Now nearly two years after leaving parish ministry to serve and live in Asia, I find myself once again serving as a parish pastor… in two different countries! And it is a great joy to be once again preaching, teaching, and serving in those ways.

Due to some changes in the field, the congregation of Lutherans in Jakarta is now gathering in our home on a regular basis. One room of our house is the chapel, where we meet to receive from our Lord's hand in His Word and Sacraments. It's a tight fit some days, but somehow it works.

Across the Strait of Malacca, I serve my other parish in Singapore. We meet in a rented room, but once again our Lord comes to meet us in Word and Sacrament. We have a group of folks I regularly count on to attend, and they're from all over the world. They're good sports about singing everything with no accompaniment, and we've begun to gather early for Bible class as well!

We have some sad news to share. In late March, Cheryl had a miscarriage. Complications forced her into the hospital in Jakarta while I was away in Medan, North Sumatra on church business. I returned home early, got her packed up and released from Jakarta, and we sprinted off to Singapore for better medical care. Rev. Roger and Amy James, along with their son Eli, came from Sri Lanka in the middle of the night in order to stay with our kids while we were in Singapore.

Cheryl received excellent care, and has been pronounced in good health again, pending a follow-up visit in mid-May. We are thankful for the Lord's hand of healing and protection, and for the support we received from the James family, and from our Regional Director Darin Storkson. We were also touched to be supported by so many from around the world via email, Skype, and telephone. We have grieved the loss of this child, and we take comfort in the coming resurrection and reuniting when our Lord Jesus comes again in glory.

As we revel in the joy of this Easter Season, we thank you for your ongoing care and concern, as you share your prayers and your financial support with us. We are grateful to be part of your team, part of your family in Christ. His peace and joy be with you now and always.

Prayers, Praises, and Thanksgiving

* Thanksgiving for all our partners who shower us with generous support so we can continue working in this land!
* Thanksgiving for Cheryl's good healing, and for our Lord's care through doctors and nurses
* For all those who grieve the death of children, that they might take comfort in the Lord's victorious resurrection
* For *ongoing* pledged support, that we might continue serving overseas according to our Lord's will
* That our gracious Lord Jesus would grant His wisdom and grace, so many would be blessed by the work we're doing in Indonesia and in Singapore.

To support our work financially, you may send a tax-deductible gift to:
The LCMS, P.O. Box 790089, St. Louis, MO 63179
Or
Mission Central, 40718 Highway E-16, Mapleton, IA 51034
Make checks payable to **The LCMS**, and mark them "Support of Charles Ferry." Gifts can also be given securely online through our online giving page at *www.lcms.org/ferry*.

!Amigos En Cristo!
News from IDW Hispanic Ministry
Missionary/Pastor Daniel Vogel

Iowa District West, LCMS
Year 11, Issue 4, April 2015

Easter Celebrations: Each year we celebrate the Easter victory of our Lord Jesus over sin and death. As is our Christian tradition, we do it to remember the wonderful Good News that we all too easily forget. And we do it for our children, to teach the next generation of our living and loving God always with us to guide and to comfort each of us throughout our lives. We try to make the children the focus of our Gospel ministry. For many Hispanics, Easter is a special time, but only if they have come from a traditional Christian background. Sadly the cults and many radical protestant church groups consider Easter as a man-made festival. We celebrate Easter as many Lutheran churches do with family, fellowship and worship. Following our special worship service our little children were given an Easter egg hunt. Then we had an Easter dinner together. What a wonderful time to share our unity as did the early church. With Jesus we call out to the church, "Let the little children come to me, do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God" (Mark 10:14).

Denison's African Ministry: Last month I participated in a very special mission meeting of African pastors and leaders from Omaha and western Iowa who gathered in Denison for support and cooperation. On Easter Sunday, in the absence of Pastor Gabriel of Denison, I was honored to lead the Dinka (Sudanese) worship service (in English) following our Hispanic worship service. What a special experience!

Serving the District Mission Banquet: Last month our church was blessed to prepare a special Hispanic meal for the annual District Mission Banquet. Over 140 mission leaders from 40 IDW congregations came to Our Savior, Denison to receive mission grants for the New Year. Our Hispanics served a variety of native dishes. We were also blessed to interact with many friends from around the District who have supported our ministry. God bless our missionaries!

My Chaplaincy at the Tyson Plant in Denison: Last month our plant hired a new Human Resource Director, Lupita. This position is so important in the plant as the HR Director hires the new workers, handles all concerns of the workers and serves in a sense as the "nerve center" of the plant life. Lupita is a blessing already. She is bilingual and has had experience as an HR officer at the Tyson plant in Lexington, Nebraska. My work is under the HR department and so Lupita is my boss at Tyson. What a blessing to work with a leader who understands and appreciates the special role of our chaplaincy program of ministry in the workplace. I look forward to working with her and the other new managers as the plant moves forward in this New Year. Pray for our new management staff and the new hourly employees that they will work with a passion for serving one another as they provide food for the world. Pray for opportunities to share the Gospel of Jesus' love.

Please Pray: + For the blessings from the Lenten season, Holy Week and Easter special services. + For our Spring evangelistic campaign to more effectively reach the Denison Hispanic community. + For new families that are attending our church that they may continue to grow and serve the Lord with us. + For my work as a Chaplain at Tyson and for opportunities to share the Gospel in the workplace, from management to hourly workers. + In thanksgiving for the mission hearts of the many individuals and congregations of Iowa District West who monthly support the Lord's work among Hispanic immigrants in Denison and in our other three Hispanic missions.

Please Continue to Support our new church: For our mission friends financial support checks should now be sent to: Amigos en Cristo Lutheran Church: 1004 S. 1 Ave., Denison, Iowa, 51442

NEW E-MAIL: E-mail me at: daniel.vogel@ ziondenison.org

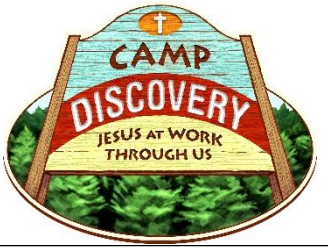
TO CONTACT ME:
Rev. Daniel Vogel
32678 Aspen Ave. Manning, Iowa, 51455
1-712-653-2354 or Cell: 712-309-1292 or
E-mail me at: Dan.Vogel@idwlcms.org

May Birthdays and Anniversaries @ Zion

1. Becky Bruch
   Lynn Nulle
2. Rita Beck
   Evelyn Gore
3. Kendra Arp
4. Oakley McManigal
6. Emily Albertsen
   Andrew Dreier
   Dustin Karsten
   Greg Sextro
7. Catherine Conner
   Lane Sams
8. Ryan Sandage
9. Daniel Dawson
10. Randy Kurth
    Rachel Ramsey
11. Robert Merriman
    Riley Willison
12. Nathan Bauer
    Jaime England
13. Lucy Borkowski
    John Ehrichs Jr.
    Kari Ranniger
14. Rodney Backhaus
    Irene Genzen
    Nathan Peters
    Todd Winter
15. Jan Henkelman
    Ella Langel
    JoAnn Thomas
16. Timothy Conner
    Nicholas Grimm
17. Emily Ceminsky
    David Genzen
    Jessica Kucik
    Kay Otto
    Mandi Sandage
18. Brad Kusel
    Gina Vollstedt
19. Brennen Morris
20. Karlee Arp
21. Kamaya Jacobsen
    Harper Morris
    Kelli Morrow
    Garry Puck
    Dereck Trimpe
22. Ty Greving
    Marlin Kahl
    Todd Ketcham
    Alexis Lesle
    Mya Sandage
    Lisa Steffes
23. Taya Vonnahme
24. Bryndon Rosener
26. Alan Grimm
27. Dennis Grimm
    Gene Lohrmann
    Joan Noelck
28. Jessica Sellner
29. Heidi Crawford
    Arlene Kusel
31. Stephanie Smith

If we missed or misspelled your name, please inform the church office.

4. David & Lori Genzen
6. Michael & Bridget Gore
10. Steve & Barb Page
13. Dan & Jennifer Behrens
20. Janet & Rich Plumb
21. Nicholas & Dena Diersen
25. Russell & Cynthia Ranniger
28. Ben & Mckensie Bess
    Delton & Janet Gruhn
    Mark & Jessica Kucik



VBS is coming! June 1-5

Get ready for Camp Discovery at Zion this summer as we see Jesus at work through us.

In order to offer an excellent VBS program, we need YOU to help. Please consider volunteering your time, creativity, and/or refreshments to make our VBS a great success!

The Rev. Dr. Matthew C. Harrison, president of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, along with some 30 other religious leaders, on April 23 signed an open letter to those in positions of public service expressing a shared commitment to promoting and protecting marriage as the union of one man and one woman. The letter (minus the signatures) is included below:

THE DEFENSE OF MARRIAGE AND THE RIGHT OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM: REAFFIRMING A SHARED WITNESS

An Open Letter from Religious Leaders to All in Positions of Public Service

Dear Friends:

At this significant time in our nation's history with the institution of marriage before the United States Supreme Court, we reaffirm our commitment to promote and defend marriage—the union of one man and one woman. As religious leaders from various faith communities, we acknowledge that marriage is the foundation of the family where children are raised by a mother and a father together. Our commitment to marriage has been expressed on previous occasions, including the Letter of Shared Commitment and Letter on Marriage and Religious Liberty. This commitment is inseparable from affirming the equal dignity of all people and the necessity of protecting their basic rights.

The state has a compelling interest in maintaining marriage as it has been understood across faiths and cultures for millennia because it has a compelling interest in the well-being of children. Every child has a mother and a father, and every child deserves the opportunity, whenever possible, to be raised by his or her own married mother and father in a stable, loving home. Marriage as the union of a man and a woman is the only institution that encourages and safeguards the connection between children and their mother and father. Although this connection cannot always be realized and sustained—and many single parents, for example, are heroic in their efforts to raise their children—it is in the best interests of the state to encourage and uphold the family founded on marriage and to afford the union of husband and wife unique legal protection and reinforcement.

The redefinition of legal marriage to include any other type of relationship has serious consequences, especially for religious freedom. It changes every law involving marital status, requiring that other such relationships be treated as if they were the same as the marital relationship of a man and a woman. No person or community, including religious organizations and individuals of faith, should be forced to accept this redefinition. For many people, accepting a redefinition of marriage would be to act against their conscience and to deny their religious beliefs and moral convictions. Government should protect the rights of those with differing views of marriage to express their beliefs and convictions without fear of intimidation, marginalization or unwarranted charges that their values imply hostility, animosity, or hatred of others.

In this and in all that we do, we are motivated by our duty to love God and neighbor. This love extends to all those who disagree with us on this issue. The well-being of men, women, and the children they conceive compels us to stand for marriage as the union of one man and one woman. We call for the preservation of the unique meaning of marriage in the law, and for renewed respect for religious freedom and for the conscience rights of all in accord with the common good.

In Our Prayers

Athena Bess, Lyle Borkowski, Franklin Mohr, Walt Noelck, Andrea Payne, Mandi Sandage, Dave Grundmeier, Judy Musfeldt, Heather Kusel, Jeff Jones, Glen Eickman, Jeanie Petersen, Robert and Ruth Hansen, Sherri Steffes, Susan Lamb, Pearl Kurth (Conrad Kurth's mom), Myra Wittrock, Duane Karstens, Steve Rutz (Karl Rutz's Brother), Natalie Mason

Official Acts in April

Baptisms: Brinley Hergenrader; daughter of Scott and Julie (nee: Riggert) Hergenrader; April 5, 2015; Pastor Riggert
Justice Cornelius, son of Kyle Cornelius and Katie Vollstedt; April 19, 2015; Pastor Conner
Ginger Wardrip, daughter of McKenna Wardrip and Gina Vollstedt; April 19, 2015; Pastor Conner
Confirmations: Jordynne Bauer, Lily Doyel, Stephen Grimm, Neeka Jacobsen, Amelia Vetter